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THE PITY OF LOVE

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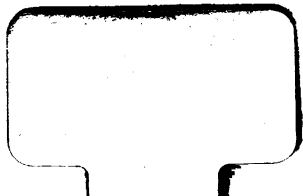
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## THE PITY OF LOVE



# THE PITY OF LOVE

A TRAGEDY

BY

THEODORE WRATISLAW

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**NOTE**

*The circumstances of the murder of Count Königsmarck as hereafter related are not precisely those which are generally accepted as historic ; but although its details are vague enough to admit of the treatment known as poetical license, I have followed as closely as I could the course of the actual story.*

*T.W.*



## PERSONS REPRESENTED

AUGUSTUS, *Duke of Celle, Elector of Hanover.*

GEORGE, *Electoral Prince of Hanover, afterwards George I. of England.*

COUNT VON PLATEN.

PHILIP VON KÖNIGSMARCK.

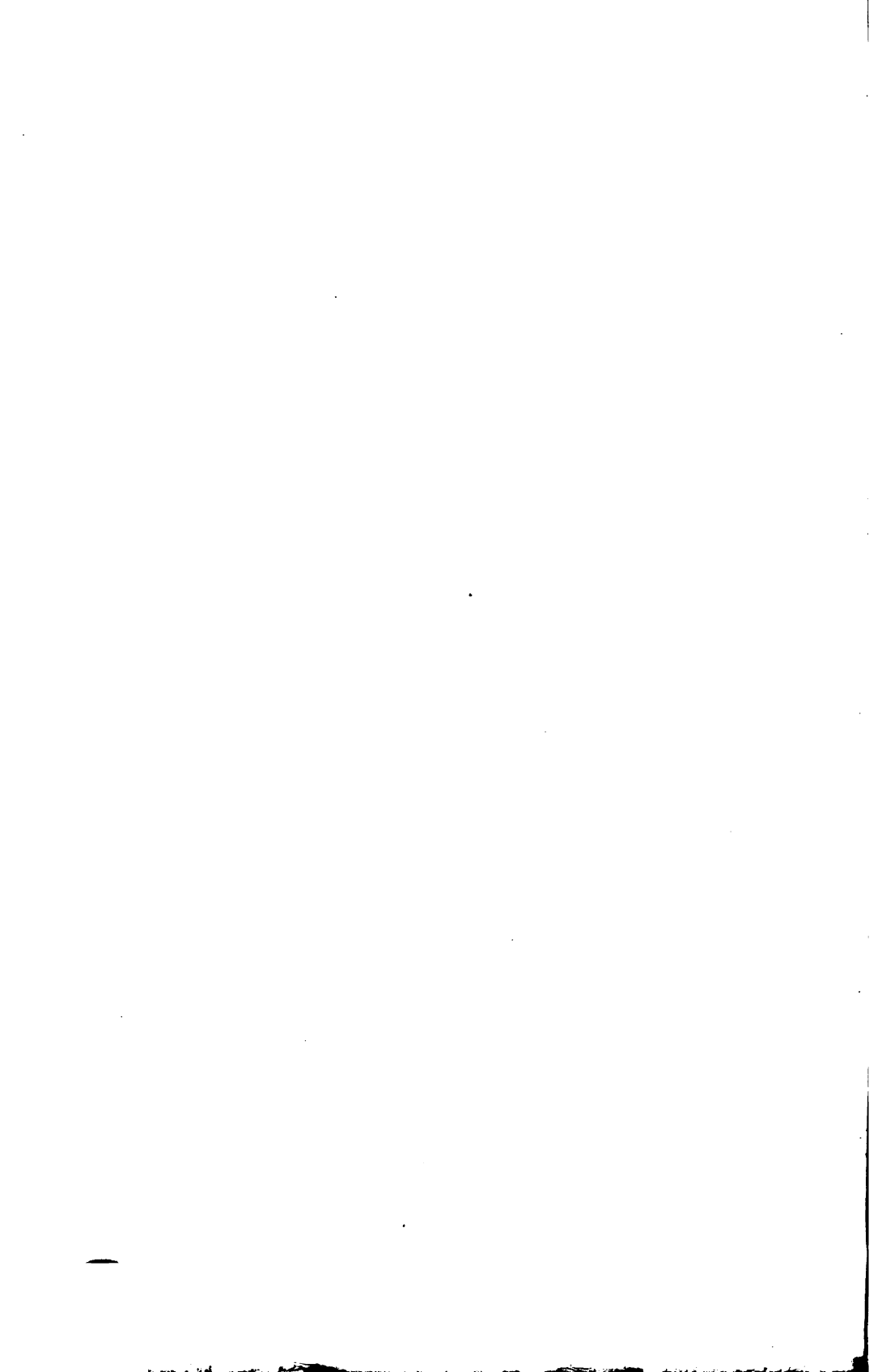
SOPHIA DOROTHEA, *Electoral Princess of Hanover.*

ELIZABETH VON PLATEN, *wife of Count von Platen.*

AURORA VON KÖNIGSMARCK, *Sister to Philip.*

Time: July 1694.

Place: The Duke's Palace at Celle.



# THE PITY OF LOVE

## SCENE I

*A Room in the Palace, with Windows in the Background opening upon a large Lawn cut by Gravel-paths and dotted with brilliant Flower-beds. There are two Doors, R and L.*

*Enter PHILIP and AURORA VON KÖNIGSMARCK, talking.*

AURORA

It is not thee, but thy rash heart I blame.

PHILIP

I met a greybeard wizard ere I came,  
Who bade me back, for did I lightly spurn  
His words, said he, I should not hence return.

AURORA

Why then didst thou not heed him?

PHILIP

Pish! What, I?  
I will see reason for it ere I die.

AURORA

Philip, thou knowest that ere thou went'st she said  
Didst thou return to Celle thou wert as dead,  
And death were thine own will and seeking.

B

## THE PITY OF LOVE

PHILIP

She?

Elizabeth Platen? Death may wait for me,  
Or here or there, I care not. Good or ill,  
Whate'er it be, it comes whene'er it will,  
And that Death is I weep not nor deplore.  
But death that is to fright us should be more  
Than the threat of a cast-off mistress. By my hand,  
Did God now strike me down, here where I stand,  
Somehow or other I would drag, before  
I died, my broken body to her door,  
And she, I know, would kneel down at my side  
And kiss mine eyes and white lips ere I died!

AURORA

The Princess! O my Philip, is thy love  
Not dead?

PHILIP

By heaven and half the saints above,  
Madden me not! I am no brain-sick girl,  
Enamoured of an eyebrow or a curl,  
Nor is my love a boy's first fancy thrown  
On her who first of women seems his own.  
A man's love holds him like the gates of hell.

AURORA

Pray heaven thy journey and thy love end well!

PHILIP

I prithee now go seek her chamber, dear,  
And lightly whisper that I wait her here.

## *THE PITY OF LOVE*

AURORA

I will not aid thee.

PHILIP

Nay, I prithee, sweet,  
Go for my sake. I would but kiss her feet  
And listen to her voice, since little more  
Fate grants such lovers from her niggard store.  
Do this for me and ask me what thou wilt.

AURORA

Nay, I will stand no partner in thy guilt.

PHILIP

Guilt! Why, great God, what ails thee thus to prate  
Of guilt? In such a world as this, so great  
With teeming horrors that the very sun  
Should hide his face from things done and undone,  
Thou dar'st to call such love as ours a crime!  
Thou art or crazed or born out of due time.

AURORA

God knows it is not I should speak of shame,  
Nor honour, woe is me! Yet thee I blame,  
For honour yet is left to thee and her.  
She still has honour for a cloak to wear;  
Her fame stands good and still her sin is dark,  
If sin it be; but let one mongrel bark  
And all the gutters' brood of ribald curs  
Responds and howls. Thus with thy name and hers.

PHILIP

One cannot heed the worm beneath one's heel

## THE PITY OF LOVE

And spitting unwashed burghers on one's steel  
Were sorry work for any noble's hand.  
Ah dear, if there be any natural band  
Of blood or love or aught between us, though  
Thy heart forbid thee, yet, I pray thee, go.  
Thou knowest her love is all my life, and save  
For her nought lives that I desire or crave,  
My queen for whom I have endured more woe  
Than any man that lives should bear or know.  
Yea, I have borne such evils for her sake  
That I must see her lest my heart should break.

AURORA

Peace, I will go: but when death chases sin,  
Though long the course, yet death, thou knowest, will win.

[Exit.

Enter ELIZABETH VON PLATEN.

ELIZABETH

Count Königsmarck!

PHILIP

Ah Madam! On thy hand  
My homage let me tender.

ELIZABETH

Whose command  
Has brought thee hither?

PHILIP

The command of none.  
An idle wish performed ere half begun,  
A freak of fancy keen to while away  
Between two dances half a tedious day.



## *THE PITY OF LOVE*

I am a bird that loves to range and change.

ELIZABETH

So wert thou ever, Philip. Yet 'tis strange  
That our sweet Princess is not where thou art.

PHILIP

Why so?

ELIZABETH

Ah Philip, strike not at my heart.  
Though with long years my face be worn and old  
My heart beats warm towards thee. Thou hast grown cold  
And full of loathing for me since the days  
When even my love was sweet to thee, my praise  
As honey in thine ears; for she, for she  
Has stolen thy love and lips away from me.  
Go not to her! For that thy love is gone  
And taken from me as a sun that shone  
I may endure though ill it be to bear:  
But if she be thy mistress, boy, I swear  
Nor she nor thou shall live. Ah Philip, go,  
Choose other women whom I shall not know,  
Find other hands to twine amidst thy curls  
And lend thy lips to lips of other girls:  
But ah not hers, not hers! This only I  
Will never bear, so heed thee lest thou die.

PHILIP

This have I heard ere now.

ELIZABETH

Ah, well I know

## THE PITY OF LOVE

That I am old, unbeautiful, and thou  
Hast youth exulting and thine eyes and hair  
And form are as Apollo's, yea more fair.  
Thou art more lovely to me than a god,  
And yet thy feet upon my heart have trod.  
Thou hast despised me and my love, and spurned  
My sorrow from thee when I would have turned  
For comfort to thee, as thou dost anew.  
God aid me for I know not what to do!  
I hate thee, Philip, with a serpent's hate.  
I hate thee since my love is very great.  
My fingers itch to slay thee. Day by day  
I ache and long to take thy life away,  
And so, if God will speed my hands, I will.

PHILIP

In God's name, woman, hold thy peace, be still.  
You tire me out of courtesy apace.

*Enter the DUKE, PRINCE GEORGE and PLATEN.*

DUKE

Von Königsmarck! on leave?

PHILIP

Even so, your Grace.

DUKE

We are glad to see you. Platen, is it wise  
To let these youngsters loose to turn their eyes  
Upon our wives? See what an innocent air  
Our valiant hero Königsmarck doth wear  
Though here we trap him head to head with thine.

## THE PITY OF LOVE

PLATEN

In wives, your Grace, there is no thine or mine.

DUKE

Faith, it is so. Come, Königsmarck, and see  
Some Arab stallions sent of late to me.

PHILIP

My lord, I wait my sister.

DUKE

Come ere long.

Thou wilt?

PHILIP

I will, my lord.

[*Exit the DUKE, PRINCE GEORGE and PLATEN.*]

ELIZABETH

O right and wrong!

If aught live past the sunlight and the stars,  
Beyond the mournful body's prison-bars,  
Beyond the white way and autumnal Seven,  
Man's right and wrong are wrong and right in heaven.  
O for some old fierce Hun's victorious hand  
To sweep our customs from the sea and land,  
Some Tamburlaine with wild barbaric mirth  
To purify intolerable earth.

Yet, Philip, though no world will do me right,—  
Since now I hate thee in my love's despite,  
Full measure will I pay thee for thy scorn,  
Thou, vile as hell, false to thy word, foresworn,  
False to thine oath and traitor to thy King!

[*Exit.*]

## THE PITY OF LOVE

PHILIP

Heaven shield us from the toil these women bring!  
Traitor forsooth: why, so perchance I am  
Since now the servant steals the King's ewe-lamb,  
Reversing half the antique fable. O  
I wrong thee, love, in thinking of thee so.  
No wife of this mute prince art thou, but mine,  
Tied to my heart by virtues too divine  
To be not cursed and evil in men's eyes,  
Poor race of fools who deem themselves so wise,  
Whose noblest laws vast folly hides within  
And whose best virtue is the vilest sin!

*Enter SOPHIA.*

SOPHIA

Philip!

PHILIP

My queen!

SOPHIA

Nay, kneel not at my feet.  
'Tis I should kneel at thine.

PHILIP

Thou art too sweet  
And rich in heavenly graces, fairest love,  
For one to greet you standing.

SOPHIA

Nay, above  
Me, Philip, art thou even as far as heaven,  
Whence by thy love how far have I been driven!

## *THE PITY OF LOVE*

PHILIP

My star, thou art more near to heaven than I  
Or any soul of men that live and die.  
O love, if love be sinful, I will pray  
That God may take thy sin of love away  
And lay it on my head, and I will bear  
Thy sin and mine as one, without despair,  
Since I shall make atonement, sweet, for thee  
And save the soul that once saved life in me.

SOPHIA

Philip! and bid God part us after death  
Like men in this harsh life of mortal breath?  
How shall I live without thee? Heaven will be  
No heaven if thou dwell not in heaven with me.

PHILIP

Yet for thy sake, sweet, would I choose to dwell,  
Could heaven thereby be gained for thee, in hell.

SOPHIA

Not without me! For, love, like Ruth of old,  
Where thou wilt go will I go and behold  
What thou beholdest, whether in heaven we stand  
And praise God with the harpstrings in our hand,  
Or like the lovers of the Italian lyre  
Forever wander in the frost and fire.  
On earth may men for honour's trivial name  
Prevent and part us lest we gather shame,  
But after death though even God forgive  
Together will we ever love and live.

## THE PITY OF LOVE

PHILIP

Would that we did on earth! O sweet, sweet, sweet,  
Let us cast off these fetters from our feet!  
Take wing and fly together, Love knows where,  
Like doves escaping through the breasted air,  
Take wing, and in some lone enchanted isle  
Live out in love and joy life's little while.  
What then were shame and honour? We should be  
Free as the rollers of the sea are free,  
The sweet green sliding rollers that all day  
Laugh under summery skies in silent play;  
Free as the birds that live and take their rest  
Upon the sweet sea's palpitating breast,  
Who heed not men, being bold and wild and free  
And portion of the world's infinity,  
Unlike us men, who, slaves in word and deed,  
Bow to unspoken law and written creed.  
Take horse with me and eight mad hoofs shall bear  
Our bodies, light as flower-dust, through swift air,  
Across deep vales and mountain-girdled plains  
And rivers swollen with hot summer rains.  
High in the wild Bohemian hills adored,  
Where kings have crashed through fight with mace and  
sword,  
I have a castle perched 'twixt earth and sky;  
Mountains and forests are the sole things nigh.  
There like the eagles may we dwell, and make  
A hiding-place and home for Love's sweet sake,  
And so forget all things save that at last  
We dwell together bound by Love's hand fast.  
And then the life that will be ours shall glide

## *THE PITY OF LOVE*

Soft as leaves murmuring by the river-side  
And sweet as visions that in sleep we see.

### SOPHIA

I pray thee cease, for, love, it may not be.  
Never for us, O never. After years  
May make amends for sorrow and for tears,  
And time may grant us some small shred of right,  
But in our eyes will never gleam the light  
That shines in happy lovers'. Flower and seed  
Will come and go and coming springtime speed  
The parting winter and the earth's bare breast  
With frondage and new blades of grass be drest,  
And dove in woodland deeps will call to dove,  
But no new year will ever bring us love.  
We are accursed of Love perchance for crime  
Against him done in some forgotten time,  
Some old life unremembered. Still, we know  
Nothing, but that on earth we suffer woe  
And haply for each fleeting joy shall pay  
A thousand times when we have passed away.

### PHILIP

Nay, come with me, for in old days gone by  
Have other lovers chosen to live and die  
In that sweet shame whereat men gibe and stare  
But which heaven surely loves if Love dwell there.  
We praise them and we glory in their sin  
Since spite of bonds and laws their love could win  
The resting-place and home of their desire.

## *THE PITY OF LOVE*

SOPHIA

'Be still : your words sting me and hurt like fire.  
I will not, cannot.

PHILIP

Is thy love then dead ?

SOPHIA

No, Philip, no. Why dost thou bend thy head ?  
Why need'st thou weep ? O Philip, trust me, dear ;  
Best for us both that I should tarry here  
Thou knowest it is. O weep not for my sake,  
For every tear thou sheddest is a snake  
That stings my heart. Kiss me lest I weep too.

PHILIP

I am a fool, and what to knaves is due,  
Is due to me for tempting thee. My queen,  
It was a dream that came to me between  
Thy words and mine, a dream of life that we  
Might now enjoy had God but bidden it be,  
A life on happier earth 'neath sunnier skies,  
That bade me play the woman with mine eyes.  
'Tis gone and it shall not return. But I,  
What rests for me save but to live and die,  
Since now I have not thee ? I can but play  
Against the trivial chances of the day,  
Seeking what best may kill the length of time,  
A woman's face, a battle or a rhyme,  
Or what the issues of the moment give.  
Such life has been and will be mine to live,  
Sweet, since thou canst not love as I love thee.



## *THE PITY OF LOVE*

SOPHIA

O I do love thee, yet this cannot be.  
Why dost thou blame me who am chained and tied  
By custom and by honour at the side  
Of one thou knowest how much I loathe and hate,  
My Philip, though thy beauty is so great,  
Forgive me and forget me!

PHILIP

I forget!

O never whilst with love abides regret;  
And, for forgiveness, sweet, not I but thou  
Must pardon. Humbly to thy grace I bow  
A suppliant head that thou mayst doom or save.

SOPHIA

I pardon thee.

PHILIP

Another gift I crave.

SOPHIA

I cannot give my word. I know not why  
They leave me here without some maid or spy.  
The very birds in cages are more free.  
I cannot tell how thou canst come to me  
Nor when.

PHILIP

To-night, when the world lies asleep.

SOPHIA

I cannot give my word. So many keep

## *THE PITY OF LOVE*

Watch in the palace who might unawares  
Track thee along the passages and stairs.  
Perchance I shall not be alone.

PHILIP

My God!

SOPHIA

Philip, this path have other lovers trod  
That now we tread. Love is no April jest,  
But a most venomous snake that eats the breast,  
And many times we swoon beneath its bite.  
For some few moments of most vain delight  
Unnumbered are the pangs and woes we bring  
Upon ourselves. Love is a dangerous thing,  
Pregnant with sorrow and all kind of ill,  
And bitterest when he may not work his will.

PHILIP

Who better knows than I that Love is this?  
But O sweet lips! for one unfettered kiss  
Prolonged between thy breasts and in thine hair  
Would I not give this tedious life of care?  
And thou, if thou didst love me as I love,  
Wouldst rate no lasting fame or shame above  
The perishable rapture of a day.

SOPHIA

I love thee in a sweeter, holier way:  
But, O my love, my king, if life alone  
Were all Love asked for payment, to atone  
For those sweet hours when I at length should live

## THE PITY OF LOVE

Life and its fruits I would most gladly give.  
But life for us—who better knows than thou?—  
For us whose heads from ancient years might bow  
To death but not dishonour, keeps in hold  
The names and honour of our sires of old.  
All that I can and may, I give to thee  
Saving the honour of their memory.

PHILIP

Yet thou dost love me?

SOPHIA

Sweet, why need'st thou ask?  
Too fierce for my poor brain is this my task.  
Listen! I will before the lights burn low  
Send thee a secret message, 'Yes' or 'No,'  
Though 'Yes' may mean not freedom from all fear.  
Then thou wilt come or stay.

PHILIP

Heaven keep thee, dear!  
O sweet, my heart beats higher in hope than yet  
Beat any lover's. Sorrow and regret  
Are vanished from beneath my sad heaven's cope  
And in their stead is born and soars my hope.

SOPHIA

Hope not too much, for in a mortal breast  
Than hope there is a no more treacherous guest;  
And, love, heed not too well thy love's command  
Since thou wilt have mine honour in thy hand.  
Be wise and wary lest some chance betray  
My sin and shame, thine honour and thy way.

## *THE PITY OF LOVE*

PHILIP

O trust me wholly, dear, or not at all.  
My head shall sooner than thine honour fall.

SOPHIA

Go now and leave me, love. Whilst thou art here  
My heart each moment stops in sudden fear.  
The Platen hates thee and she spies on me.

PHILIP

Curse her!

SOPHIA

But yet the fault, dear, lies with thee.

PHILIP

For yielding, yes. I made no love to her.  
Her worn and patched-up face that scarce can stir  
The amorous pulses of our gracious lord  
Could scarce by me be worshipped and adored.  
But thou, my flower of women, whom I won,  
My morning star and evening star in one,  
Some moments longer tarry with me still.

SOPHIA

So would I, Philip, had I all my will,  
Yea, dwell with thee forever if the might  
Of fate forbade not such divine delight,  
But fate that has each mortal for its foe  
Forbids our joy, and now it bids thee go.

PHILIP

Farewell, farewell, my queen. 'Tis ill to say,  
Worse to perform.

## THE PITY OF LOVE

SOPHIA

Philip, thou knowest the way,  
Up the broad staircase from the hall and through  
The passages?

PHILIP

More well than aught I knew  
Or know, for in my dreams I pass and pass  
Along them vainly, seeking thee, alas!

SOPHIA

To-night perchance thou shalt not seek in vain.  
But now I dare not stay.

PHILIP

Farewell again,  
And yet again farewell.

SOPHIA

Sweet heart, farewell.

PHILIP

My princess and my love!

*[Exeunt severally.]*

*Enter ELIZABETH.*

ELIZABETH

Ay, part till hell  
Receive your gasping souls in tireless flame  
And shake with echoing laughter at your shame!  
Sweet, sweet may be your youth, your love's hot wine,  
But sweeter the revenge that shall be mine.  
May God reward thee, Philip, for my pain

## THE PITY OF LOVE

And thee, my princess, for thy stolen gain!  
Hell torture you with cutthroat, thief and liar,  
And whip you with its chains and snakes of fire!  
But would to God that I on earth might sate  
Upon your limbs the measure of my hate!  
Ye should be torn asunder, burned and flayed,  
Bound naked in the market-place and made  
The mockery of the ribald gutters' scum,  
Racked, maimed and crushed, made deaf and blind and  
dumb.

Woe's me I may not this! But in my hand  
I hold your lives and ye tonight shall stand  
Before God's throne and hear his voice proclaim  
Eternal torture in eternal flame.  
O joy to cut your beauty's scarce-blown flower,  
To slay you in your spring's exultant hour  
When many a joy and many a dream too sweet  
To last till age are laid before your feet.  
False hopes beguile you through the lingering day,  
And when night comes with death will I repay!

*Enter the* DUKE, PRINCE GEORGE *and* PLATEN.

DUKE

Where is von Königsmarck?

ELIZABETH

He has but now

Gone, my good lord.

DUKE

Long audience thou

Dost grant to him.

## *THE PITY OF LOVE*

ELIZABETH

I'faith, it was not I  
Who held him from thee by so close a tie.  
Scant reverence hath Count Königsmarck for me.

DUKE

Why, who can Königsmarck's last conquest be?  
Who is it? come!

ELIZABETH

Her Highness, as it seems,  
Though such a thought might seem too wild for dreams.

DUKE

You jest.

ELIZABETH

I do not.

DUKE

What has she to do  
With Königsmarck or Königsmarck with her?

ELIZABETH

I too

Had wondered, had I not by fortune heard  
Half of their converse.

DUKE

Platen, this the third  
Time is when such report has reached our ears.  
'Tis time to search more deeply what one fears.  
Thou hast strange knowledge written on thy brow,  
Countess: speak all thou knowest, standing now  
Before thy Duke and Council.

## THE PITY OF LOVE

ELIZABETH

All I heard

Were easily spoken in a single word,  
For coming hither by the garden way  
I heard two voices and the Princess say  
*I will, my dearest, when the lights burn low  
Send thee a secret message, Yes or No,  
Which any lover knows mean Stay or Come.*  
As for the rest, pray ye my lips be dumb,  
For they did so revile the Prince's grace  
That did I speak, my words would shame my face.

DUKE

This on thine oath?

ELIZABETH

I swear it.

DUKE

Then by God,

If fortune aid, the jest will end in blood.  
Advise us, Platen.

PLATEN

'Twere not ill, my lord,  
To stay his lover's progress with the sword.

DUKE

Ay, if we trap him in the very deed!  
But not unjudged, unheard. Our honour's creed  
Demands more knowledge ere it strike a blow.  
We needs must watch him if he come or go.  
We will speak more of this ere evening come.  
Meanwhile I charge you let your lips be dumb.

*[Exeunt severally.]*



## THE PITY OF LOVE

### SCENE II

*Several Hours have elapsed. The Scene is the Princess's Bed-chamber. She is wearing a loose white Night-robe of spun Silk with lace Ruffles at the Neck and Sleeves, and her bare Feet are shod with white embroidered Slippers. As she sits before a Crucifix one of her Maids brushes out her dead-gold Hair and at length goes. She rises and walks up and down.*

SOPHIA

Ah, had I bidden him come now should I wait  
As one who stands before heaven's opening gate.  
Alas, I dared not bid him. Woe is me  
For all that might have been and yet might be!  
My God, why didst thou tempt me thus? O why  
Didst thou foredoom me to a state so high?  
Far happier lives the serf that tills the field  
Than we who gain all things the earth doth yield  
Save joy and love, of all earth's gifts the best  
And without which how vain are all the rest!  
Why didst thou mate me with this witless fool  
When Philip's love has been mine only school?  
If I have sinned, thine was the guilt and crime  
So slowly drags along the length of time. [weeping  
O Philip come and take me far away,  
I will not longer live if I must stay.  
Come, Philip, come. I have no shame or fear  
Left in me now.

PHILIP

[Entering

My goddess, I am here!

## THE PITY OF LOVE

SOPHIA

*[Throwing herself on his neck]*

O thou hast come! Sweet, didst thou hear my prayer  
So very far from me? Did angels bear  
The message of my tears and weeping? O  
Kiss me, my love, I have desired thee so!  
Take me away, my Philip. Nothing now  
Shall hold me from thee, love, if only thou  
Wilt take me hence and be most true to me.

PHILIP

How could I not, sweet lips, be true to thee?  
Ay, come and ere the cock crow will we fly  
Eastward, to watch the golden sun mount high.  
The Duke and that dumb fool who calls thee wife  
Sit round the tables at their gaming strife  
With half the court, bemused with food and wine.  
O let thy lips once more be wholly mine  
Ere I go rouse my grooms!

SOPHIA

Nay, Philip, nay,  
I dare not, else I had not bidden thee stay.

PHILIP

Thou badst me come.

SOPHIA

I did not.

PHILIP

Thou didst write!

*THE PITY OF LOVE*

SOPHIA

I did not, Philip.

PHILIP

Didst thou not endite

This letter?

SOPHIA

I? Why no! Come, let me see.

Philip, this is not mine! Whose can it be?

'Tis like my hand, yet is not mine. 'Tis hers!

The she-devil Platen!

PHILIP

God's eternal curse

Blast and consume her soul! Why wrote she this?

SOPHIA

Oh! Oh! I see! Can'st thou see what it is?

This is the devil's own trick to trap us both.

Didst thou of old not tell me of her oath

To have thy life shouldst thou come here again?

And now thou art caught, thou art tricked and trapped  
and slain.

What can we do? Thou canst not go. They wait

Surely in every passage, stair and gate,

Hot for thy blood. I will not let thee die.

PHILIP

Nay, loose my hands. I have not learned to fly

Death, and by this it is too late to learn.

Come, let me go.

## THE PITY OF LOVE

SOPHIA

Philip, why dost thou spurn  
Me from thee? Speak! Philip, O speak to me!  
Thou canst not dream me traitorous to thee?

PHILIP

Forgive me if my thought did do thee wrong,  
So swiftly woven seemed the toils and strong.  
Yet let me go, for haply time remains  
Wherein to free us from these close-drawn chains.

SOPHIA

I will not now. Come, kiss me. Good or ill,  
Whatever come, feed on me all thy will.  
Kiss me and crush me to thee. Sweet, I am tired  
Of lacking all my heart has long desired.  
I am sick of this pale world. Let honour fall,  
Thy body and thy lips are all in all.  
I ache for thee: for thee I am nigh dead.  
What when thine arms are closed about mine head  
Is honour? Kiss me as in the days that were,  
Over the eyes and mouth and throat and hair;  
Come kiss my breasts and lip my tender skin  
And let us die together and within  
Each other's arms as once we slept of old.  
Thou shalt not go, thou shalt not loose my hold.  
I need thee now. Thou shalt not say me nay,  
Thou canst not spurn me if I kneel and pray!

PHILIP

Listen, canst thou hear aught?

## THE PITY OF LOVE

SOPHIA

There is no sound.

Thou shalt not go. Sweet, place thy sweet arms round  
My neck and hearken to me!

PHILIP

Dear my love!

Thou knowest how I have loved thee, far above  
All other women whom the chanceful day  
Gave to my hand or cast across my way.  
Above all hope of fame or wealth or place  
Shone ever in my heart thy heavenly face.  
Alone for thee I lived and gave no heed  
To aught save this one hope that was my need—  
My hungering heart's sole food, my spirit's wine—  
The chance that Fate should bring thy lips to mine.  
And, sweet, when chance did give what oft we missed  
Thou knowest how well my ravenous lips have kissed  
Thy body fragrant as a flower is fair  
From thy white feet to thine enchanted hair.  
My heart stands still, to dream how oft of old  
Thy body quivered in mine arms' hot hold,  
When mouth ate mouth and breast was crushed on breast,  
And such an hour of all things seemed the best.  
Yet now no longer let thy love beguile  
My feet to stay, for else my love were vile  
That loving only thy sweet lips aflame  
Could love not more thine honour and good name.

SOPHIA

Nay, for thou shalt not go! Love is more great  
Than life or name. Stay with me now and wait

## *THE PITY OF LOVE*

Their coming. Theirs shall be the shame, not mine!  
Why, who shall blame me if my heart was thine?  
My shame shall be my honour's very crown,  
And from the height I gain will I look down  
On those poor fools who weep and moan beneath  
And toil for virtue's soiled and tattered wreath.  
Stay, for they dare not slay thee with me here,  
But if thou goest thou hast the worst to fear.

PHILIP

Thine honour, sweet, I yet am fain to save.

SOPHIA

That was no bargain 'twixt us when I gave  
It unto thee! It still is mine to lose  
If so I will, or keep if so I choose,  
And now I choose to lose it.

PHILIP

Thou shalt not,  
Or I am viler than a worm, God wot!

SOPHIA

Hear me, for Death lies there in wait for thee.  
When thou art dead, what shall become of me?  
What will my life be in the years when thou  
Art dust, if life be weary to me now?  
Shall I worn white with sorrow hide my heart  
And paint my lips to play my weary part  
Among the shallow fopperies of the world,  
Smiling, though ten times in my bosom curled  
The snake of grief bites harder than a tear?

## *THE PITY OF LOVE*

I would that thou didst slay me standing here,  
Lest I should live such life as once I had,  
Weary and full of loathing and most sad,  
Barren of joy, fulfilled with grief and strife,  
Ere like a god thou cam'st into my life.  
Look what a life were mine when thou art dead!  
Each dawn shall I wake weeping on my bed  
And weep the weary day through and the night,  
Remembering all our dead and gone delight,  
Thy face, thy lips, thy gracious words and ways,  
Thy kisses on me shed, the sweet bright days  
That came each one like some enchanted bride  
And laden with the ghosts of kisses died.  
Thou shalt not die: I will not let thee go!  
Listen!

PHILIP

What is it?

SOPHIA

On the steps below  
Methought I heard a sword clank.

PHILIP

Here is mine.  
I heard no sound. O love, these words of thine,  
If they have watched me hither, can but make  
Mine end more sure.

SOPHIA

Yet tarry for my sake.  
Come sit by me. I think I am grown mad.

## THE PITY OF LOVE

I am not fearful now, nor glad nor sad,  
But only tired. Come, Philip, shall we sleep?  
Methinks I would lie down a while and weep  
A little, on thy shoulder. Is't not strange  
The world should be so full of toil and change?  
I have i' faith oft wished that I were dead!  
Hold me a while before we go to bed,  
I cannot sit upright, I am so tired.  
So much there was of old that I desired,  
So little now remains: I would but sleep.  
Ever within their graves the dead men keep  
Eternal silence, and I do believe  
They neither sorrow, mourn nor moan nor grieve.  
They are most happy, Philip, for I know  
It is not well to live and love. Ah, no!  
I had a lover once, and where is he?  
Methinks they drowned him in the cruel sea.

PHILIP

Dorothy!

SOPHIA

Yes, that is my name. They say  
It means the gift of God. Ah, well-a-day,  
I do not think God meant to do me wrong.

PHILIP

My God, thou might'st have spared me this!

SOPHIA

Not long

Will God spare anybody. No, my love,  
No more amongst the living wilt thou move,



## THE PITY OF LOVE

And nevermore wilt thou return to me.  
Thou art dead and buried in the bitter sea  
And over thee the great waves ever go!

PHILIP

Dorothy! wake and speak!

SOPHIA

I do not know  
Who thou canst be, unless thou art the ghost  
Of that sweet lover whom of old I lost.  
Put me to bed, I am so fain to sleep,  
And let me dream for ever, lest I weep.

*[She lies down on the Bed and faints. He kisses  
her and speaks, bending over her.]*

PHILIP

Sweet heart, farewell! This is a sorry end  
For us, though life was never yet our friend.  
Sleep on, sweet eyes I close with this last kiss:  
Ye did not dream so harsh a fate as this.  
Sleep on and wake not, if God will, again.  
Dear face that was my pleasure and my pain,  
Dear little hands that held my life between  
Their tender palms, and little breasts half-seen,  
Fair bosom where my weary head oft fell,  
Of you I take my long and last farewell.  
Some joy, though all too little, once we knew,  
Some days of pleasure had we, all too few:  
And yet for these, though they have passed away,  
Life's very self is not too much to pay.  
Fain would I live beneath the sun and sky,

## THE PITY OF LOVE

But if death waits I am not feared to die;  
I only fear to leave thee to thy fate.  
Who knows what years and weariness await  
Thee now? May heaven be gentle to thee, sweet!  
Thou wert not made for pain. It were more meet  
If I alone should pay our love's deep debt  
And thou live longer only to forget.  
Come, one more kiss, it is the last. Farewell!  
Sleep hold thee in the magic of its spell  
And life be tender to thee as the breath  
Between thy lips.

And now, my heart, for death!

*[Exit. After some Minutes she  
awakes and starts up.]*

SOPHIA

Philip! Where art thou? Philip! Come to me!  
Thou shalt not die unless I die with thee!

*[She goes hastily out of the Room.]*

## THE PITY OF LOVE

### SCENE III

*The Scene has changed to the Great Hall in the Palace. A Balcony runs round it, with a Staircase descending upon the Stage. It is dark, but by the Light of Spirits burning in a Punch-bowl, the Figures of ELIZABETH and four of the DUKE'S Guards can be seen standing round it. Enter the DUKE, PRINCE GEORGE and FLATEN. They speak in low Tones.*

DUKE

Hath he now come?

ELIZABETH

Not yet. We watched him by,

An hour ago.

GEORGE

The knave is feared to die.

DUKE

Then, by the angels, shalt thou be the first  
To meet him!

GEORGE

I? His sword is half accursed.  
I am no coward, yet I will not fight.

DUKE

Go then and rouse him, lest we watch all night.

GEORGE

'Tis not my task.

## THE PITY OF LOVE

DUKE

Not thine? Why, then, whose wife  
Is now with him?

GEORGE

I am not keen for strife.

DUKE

Fool, get thee hence! I am half shamed that one  
As gallant and as fearless as the sun  
Should die not by a noble's hand: and now,  
Von Königsmarck seems such a knight and thou  
So base a fool, I fain would let him live.

ELIZABETH

Thy son's wife's shame is thine.

DUKE

Pish! Could I give  
The man his life, I were not waiting here.

PLATEN

Listen, he comes!

DUKE

He does not step with fear.

*[PHILIP appears in the Balcony. He  
descends a few Steps and halts.]*

DUKE

Von Königsmarck, thou art condemned to die.

PHILIP

It were not ill, perchance, did I know why.

*THE PITY OF LOVE*

DUKE

We know thine errand.

PHILIP

If thou dost, thou art  
More wise than now I think thee!

DUKE

Play thy part:

But thou art nigh to death.

PHILIP

My gracious lord,  
That I fear death from carbine, pike or sword  
Thou knowest is false: but hear me lest ye slight  
A woman wrongly. I did go tonight  
To try the Princess' chamber. I have failed:  
My love was vanquished and her will prevailed.

ELIZABETH

'Tis false, 'tis false! She bade thee go to her.

PHILIP

The lie is thine, thou devil's minister!  
Hadst thou not sent thy lying letter, I  
Had never gone.

ELIZABETH

This is no time to lie,  
Count Königsmarck. I heard her speak with thee,  
And now the Duke knows all thy craft.

## THE PITY OF LOVE

PHILIP [Turning to the DUKE.

For me,  
I can but plead my innocence of crime,  
Nor is her Highness guiltier.

DUKE

'Tis time!

Set on him, men!

*[The Guards attack PHILIP. He defends himself for some time, and after wounding three, kills one of them, but his Sword breaks: he is run through and falls to the Bottom of the Stairs.]*

PHILIP

Curse you! I would have slain  
You all like dogs! Ah curse this sickening pain!  
Come near and I will kill you with my teeth!  
I am finished now, ready to lie beneath  
The earth and fatten worms. 'Tis a sweet end,  
By heaven! Cursed hag, may God ere long amend  
Thy face and drive thy soul to shriek in hell!  
Ah! Curse this pain!

DUKE

Von Königsmarck, 'twere well  
If thou didst now speak truth. Wilt thou deny  
Thou wert the Princess' lover?

PHILIP

That will I.  
She is more pure than that cursed hag is foul!  
O this is sweet for one like me to howl,  
Dying, slain by a cast-off harlot's hand!

## THE PITY OF LOVE

God curse you all, blind fools who gape and stand  
Fooled by the strumpeted hag I spat away!

[ELIZABETH sets her Heel on his  
Mouth and crushes it.

ELIZABETH

Swallow thy lie—'twill choke thee lest thou pray—  
And bear it with thee in thy throat to hell,  
And writhing there in sulphurous torments tell  
The fiends that they may laugh with echoing scorn  
Of thee, thou saint more pure than thou wert born!

PHILIP

Ah!

GEORGE

Strangle him!

DUKE

[To ELIZABETH.

Take off thy foot. Get hence!

PHILIP

O, in God's name I swear her innocence.  
Dorothy!

[SOPHIA appears on the Balcony. She descends  
and throws herself upon PHILIP.

SOPHIA

Philip!

PHILIP

Dearest, I am dead.  
The curs have done their work.

## THE PITY OF LOVE

SOPHIA *[Lifting his Head.*

Sweet, lean thine head

Upon me. *[Turning to the others, who have drawn back.*

Ye, do ye get hence, who dared

Not fight him save with seven to one and snared

By most ignoble fraud. Leave us alone!

Base murderers that ye are, I would not moan

Nor weep while such as ye are standing by.

PHILIP

O kiss me once and let me quickly die.

Farewell, sweet lips, farewell, remember me!

*[He dies. SOPHIA rises to her Feet and gazes at him, lifting her Arms above her Head.*

SOPHIA

Philip, Philip! Can I not die with thee?

*[She falls swooning upon his Body.*

CURTAIN



BY THE SAME WRITER.

*Love's Memorial.* Over, Rugby, 1892 (out of print).

*Some Verses.* Over, Rugby, 1892 (out of print, but partly reprinted in the following book).

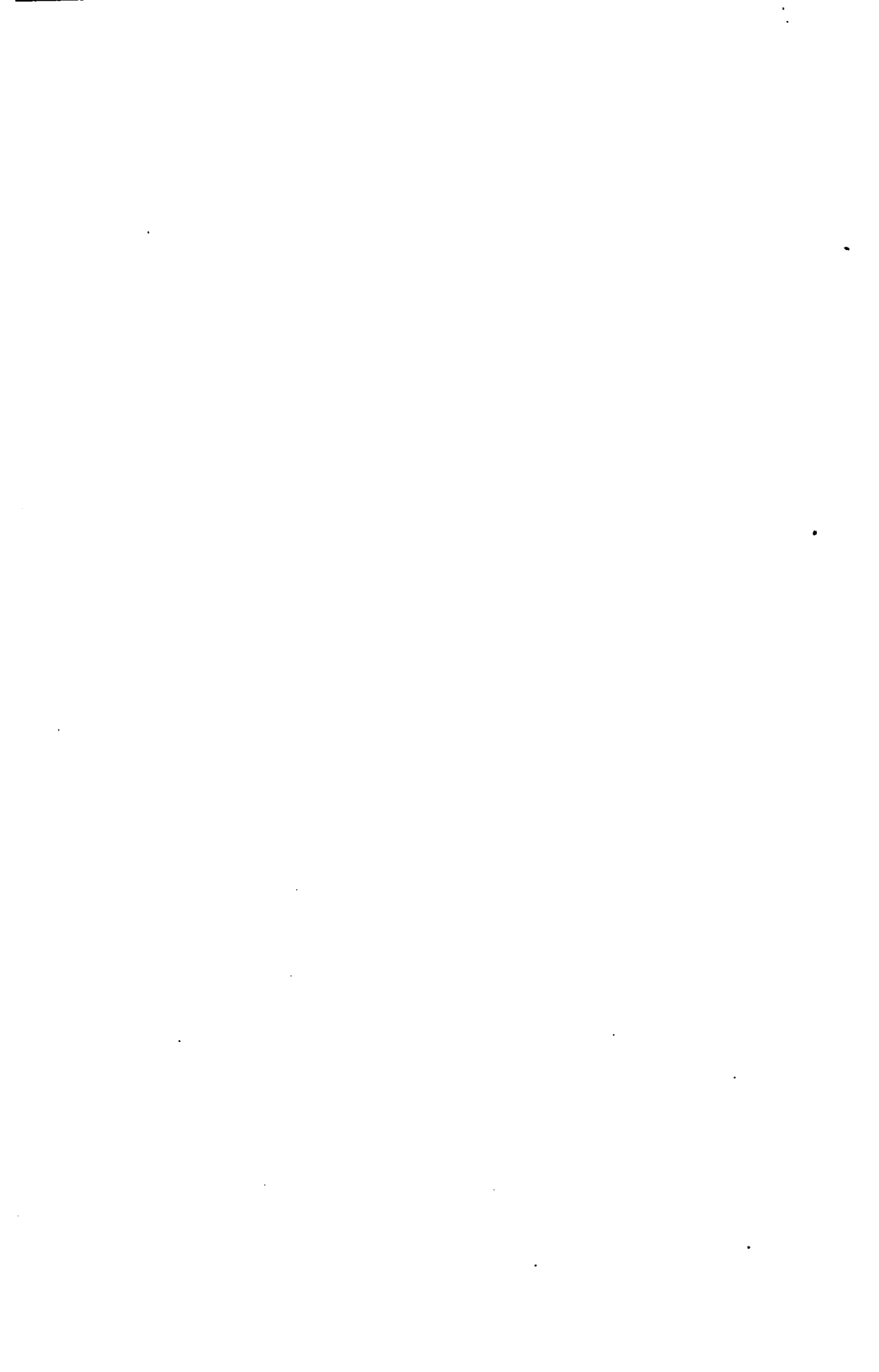
*Caprices.* Poems. Gay & Bird, London, 1893.

*The Republic of Plato*, translated by Thomas Taylor, edited with an introduction by T. W. (W. Scott, London, 1894).









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